

no matter how great the risk? How can we advance medical service and yet provide a cheaper product?

For certain of these issues, a national forum convened by the leadership of medicine may be the most expeditious starting point.

Healing First, Dollars Second

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THE ONLY STATEMENT in the forum published in the August issue that was really interesting to me was that entitled "The Credo of An Honored Profession" by Lonnie R. Bristow.¹

The basic theme of Dr Bristow's article is sound: "healing first, dollars second." Unfortunately not all physicians would agree with this in actual practice and belief. It is also not really "medicine against the world" although one of our biggest problems is that far too many physicians appear today to

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be just as guilty as the corporate world in putting dollars before healing. The house of medicine is far from unified on this subject. Were we truly and solidly behind the philosophy of "healing first, dollars second," it would be much easier to defend our honored profession and close ranks against those who would dishonor it.

It seems to me that Dr Bristow's article should be distributed both for internal consumption (within the profession) and outside consumption (by the corporate, business, governmental and regulatory segments of society). The article has substantial political value, although of course there is nothing particularly new in the philosophy presented. Some of the examples given in the article—such as corporate acquisition of medical schools and a Southern California HMO advertising that its hospitals will kick back a portion of profits to those doctors admitting patients with medical diagnoses that result in big profits to the hospital under the new Medicare system—appear to be illegal under the Medicare Quality Assurance Act of 1986 which is introduced by Senator Heinz (R-Pa) and Representative Stark (D-Calif).

We must agree with the message presented by Dr Bristow but more is required in implementing his recommendations.

REFERENCE

1. Bristow LR: The credo of an honored profession—*In* The aim of American medicine within the constraints of today's society—A forum. *West J Med* 1986 Aug; 145:190-191